

	<p><b>Michigan Technical Note</b></p> <p><b>USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service</b></p>
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## **Grazing Technical Note 8**

**Subject: Photo-Point Monitoring for Brush, Weed and Pasture Changes**

**Date: October 2010**

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring is utilized to determine if current management actions are meeting management objectives and having the desired effect on natural resources. Monitoring is used to quantify effects of management or environmental variation, at a location, through time. Monitoring can be short term; for example, to quantify the amount of biomass removed during a grazing event. It can also be long term, such as to quantify changes in plant basal cover or vegetation structure.

The most useful monitoring programs help managers achieve long term management objectives by generating relevant data. It is essential to clearly define both management and monitoring objectives before designing a monitoring program. Once defined, the appropriate monitoring techniques and monitoring locations can be selected.

### **Benefits**

Monitoring can help managers understand how much benefit is derived from changes in grazing management or from investments in rangeland or pastureland improvements. Monitoring data is utilized to: (1) evaluate effects of past and present management, (2) confirm effective management practices, and (3) identify trends that can be used to predict future changes so management strategies can be adapted accordingly.

### **Photo-Point Monitoring**

Photo-point monitoring requires an operator to determine location of monitoring sites; collect and interpret data; and refine management strategies, as needed. Photo point monitoring involves establishing permanent photo points and returning annually to take photographs at these locations. Photo point monitoring provides a visual record of changes. Over time, these images will show a trend in resource conditions that can be used to guide management decisions.

### **Required Elements:**

- For each photo point, at least one close-up and one landscape photo will be needed. Close-up photographs show specific characteristics of an area such as soil surface, ground cover, or litter. Landscape photographs document broad changes in conditions over time.
- Photographs should be taken at least annually at the same time each year.
- Brief description of how data was utilized in refining management decisions

**Procedure:**

- Establish the photo point and mark with a brightly painted steel or wooden post or survey flag; alternatively use an existing permanent structure such as a fence post.
- On the data sheet provided, briefly describe the photo point location and why the site was selected.
- For landscape photographs, record a compass direction to help position the camera for future photographs. If possible, include a landmark in the background or place a second permanent marker about 20 feet away from the photo point marker to line up the photograph.
- Be sure to include a photo ID data sheet that is large enough to be visible in the picture identifying the date, photo point number, and pasture or field name and/or number.

**Pasture/Field  
Name/Number:**

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**Photo  
Point ID:**

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**Observer:**

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**Date:**

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